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E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/10/2017

TAGS: PREL UNSC MO AG  
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR SANDERS' MEETING WITH POLISARIO FRONT  
SECRETARY-GENERAL MOHAMED ABDELAZIZ

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REF: STATE 29836

Classified By: Classified by Ambassador Jackie W. Sanders. E.O 12958. Reasons 1.4 (B&D).

¶11. (C) Summary: In a March 9 meeting he requested with USUN Ambassador Sanders, Polisario Front Secretary-General Mohamed Abdelaziz said he had traveled to the U.S. to reaffirm the Polisario position on the Western Sahara problem in light of the Moroccan announcement of an autonomy proposal and its subsequent worldwide diplomatic initiative to promote that proposal. Abdelaziz said that the Polisario categorically rejects any plan for which Moroccan sovereignty is a given. Such a plan contradicts existing UN resolutions on decolonization and self-determination and its introduction would be a destabilizing event for regional security. In response to Ambassador Sander's encouragement of direct Polisario-Moroccan talks without precondition, Abdelaziz asserted that it would be hard to imagine talks without an agenda, that there had to be something to discuss and that something could not be predicated on Moroccan sovereignty. Moreover, he said, the Polisario leadership was authorized to negotiate only on issues dealing with the referendum and self-determination and that any deviation from that mandate would mean the end of the Polisario leadership. End Summary.

¶12. (C) Per Department authorization reftel Ambassador Sanders accepted Polisario Front Secretary General Mohamed Abdelaziz's request for a March 9, 2007 meeting. The meeting was held at the Residence. SYG Abdelaziz was accompanied by Polisario MINURSO Coordinator Emhamed Khaddad, Polisario New York Representative Ahmed Boukhari, Polisario Washington Representative Mouloud Said, who translated, and Presidential Adviser Brika Brahim Abdati.

¶13. (C) Abdelaziz said he had traveled to the U.S. to clarify the Polisario position on the Western Sahara problem in the light of Morocco's announcement of an autonomy proposal and its accompanying worldwide diplomatic initiative to promote it. Abdelaziz gave a lengthy summary of the history of the Polisario in Western Sahara and its official positions on four issues: the solution to the Western Sahara problem; the Moroccan proposal; Human Rights; and the exploitation of Western Saharan resources. His forty-minute summary closely tracked his March 8 presentation to Security Council President Kumalo, the letter version of which we have emailed to the Department.

Polisario Positions

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¶14. (U) On the solution to conflict in the Western Sahara,

Abdelaziz underscored UN recognition that the question of Western Sahara is a decolonisation problem that should be resolved by the implementation of the principle of self-determination. He further pointed out that the UN and AU have affirmed that the appropriate solution lay in the Sahrawi exercise of self-determination through a referendum organized by the UN. He said that Morocco has obstructed the process and called on the Security Council to reactivate the peace process with a view to holding the referendum on self-determination.

¶ 15. (U) Abdelaziz characterized Morocco's "so-called" autonomy proposal as a pseudo-solution that was unilateral and more a maneuver than a proposal. He said that Morocco's declared intention of proposing "autonomy" within the framework of Moroccan sovereignty would imply that both Western Sahara was an integral part of Morocco and the Sahrawi people, of the population of the occupying power. Thus, because it does not respect the right of the Sahrawi people to self-determination, the proposal could not be considered "mutually acceptable" and the Polisario categorically rejected the proposal. Abdelaziz added that neither the Security Council nor the Secretary-General had asked the parties to unilaterally present proposals that differed from the Settlement Plan, the Houston Agreements and the Baker Plan nor could they have requested any proposals that violated the right to self-determination inherent in the decolonisation question. Finally, Abdelaziz said that the Moroccan autonomy proposal was a destabilizing event that would complicate regional security. After thirty years of negotiations, the Moroccans wanted to take everything off the table and start all over again as though it were 1975 (when the Polisario began its resistance campaigns).

¶ 16. (U) On Human Rights, Abdelaziz asserted that a report from the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights had confirmed that Morocco had violated human rights in Western

Sahara, the primary cause of which was the non-respect for the right of the Sahrawi people to self-determination. He said the Security Council should expand the mandate of MINURSO to defend human rights in Western Sahara. On the exploitation of Western Sahara resources, Abdelaziz said that the Security Council should declare the illegality of any exploitation, extraction, marketing or commercialization by Morocco of the natural resources of Western Sahara, taking into account the precedent of Namibia.

#### Response to Idea of Direct Dialogue

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¶ 17. (C) Ambassador Sanders, per points provided reftel, encouraged the Polisario to engage in a direct dialogue with Morocco. She said the way forward was a dialogue, without preconditions, between the Polisario and Morocco. She said we had stressed the same points publicly and privately with Morocco and had informed them that such direct contact had to occur to develop a viable solution. Ambassador Sanders recalled that Ambassador Bolton had indicated at a breakfast meeting last year that we would be willing to host a meeting between Polisario and Morocco and that the offer was still on the table.

¶ 18. (C) Responding to Ambassador Sanders, Abdelaziz said that the Polisario could simply not enter into any negotiation in which Moroccan sovereignty was a given. Moreover it was difficult for the Polisario to imagine a negotiation without preconditions -- the idea that Morocco and Polisario would agree to a meeting without an agenda. Abdelaziz said that there had to be something to discuss. Finally, Abdelaziz said that the Polisario leadership was authorized by the Sahrawi people only to negotiate a referendum on the basis of self-determination and that any action the leadership might take that deviated from that mandate would mean the end of the Polisario leadership.

¶ 19. (C) Ambassador Sanders reiterated reftel points on the

importance of engagement, pointing out while there is certainly sympathy in the international community for the people of Western Sahara, there will be a point at which the international community is going to lose interest in the issue if there appears to be no chance of resolving the question because of the refusal of one or both sides to engage. Moreover, lack of Polisario engagement would cause members of the international community to sway towards Moroccan views. She reminded Abdelaziz that any plan Morocco might present would ultimately have to be endorsed by the UN and the international community. In the near future the international community would consider some product and dialogue was the Polisario's best opportunity to influence that product. She counseled that the Polisario should continue to consider carefully the value of direct dialogue with Morocco.

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